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ABSTRACT

Team building and delegation are two of the most important tools available to division chairs or academic officers for increasing productivity and allowing employees to grow, but they are both often misunderstood, misused, or unused. Teams are small groups with the authority and technical, interpersonal, and managerial skills to carry out projects, initiatives, or other tasks. Team building requires that the effort start at the top, have commitment from the highest levels, be based on trust, abide by established ground rules, include continuous team training, involve shared and rotated division duties, set goals and objectives, hold regular team meetings, involve ongoing feedback and performance evaluation, change the supervisor's role to that of facilitator, and be fun. Delegation occurs when chairs or administrators assign responsibilities and grant authority to accomplish tasks. While delegation will not work in all cases, benefits from its use include the fact that it frees chairs and administrators for other tasks, expresses faith in the team, increases motivation and faculty loyalty, and promotes staff development. Finally, when delegating, administrators should identify tasks that need to be accomplished; assign the tasks to faculty, clearly detailing expectations and authority; provide necessary training; periodically check on progress; review results with the delegate; and provide feedback. (BCY)

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DELEGATION AND OTHER TEAMBUILDING PROCESSES:

TRANSFORMING YOUR DEPARTMENT AND PROGRAMS

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Biography

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Dr. Phelan is currently the Executive Vice President at Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) located in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. He served as the Vice President of Educational Services at WNCC from August of 1993 to July of 1995. Prior to his appointment at WNCC, he served as the Executive Director of the Business and Industry Institute of Johnson County Community College (JCCC) in Overland Park, Kansas from June of 1990 to August of 1993. He has also served at North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) at Mason City, Iowa and Mount St. Clare College (MSCC) in Clinton, Iowa. He has been involved in higher education for more than 15 years, serving in faculty, administrative, and consulting roles. He has trained and consulted in both business and education circles on Strategic Planning, Total Quality Management, Continuous Quality Improvement, Instructional Strategies, Leadership, Employee Training, Adult Education, Contract Training, Management Development, Higher Education, Outcomes Assessment, Community Colleges, and others. He has published essays and articles on many of these topical areas. Dr. Phelan holds an M.B.A., with an emphasis in finance and marketing, from St. Ambrose University and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Iowa State University.

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DELEGATION AND OTHER TEAM BUILDING PROCESSES: TRANSFORMING YOUR DEPARTMENT AND PROGRAMS

Session Summary:

This interactive presentation will focus on team building and delegation as two of the most important tools of a Division Chair or Academic Officer. Unfortunately, both practices are often misunderstood, misused, and unused leadership tools. Come and explore some tactics for incorporating these tools into your daily activities. Used effectively, team building and delegation will ultimately increase your productivity and provide a vehicle for others in your department to grow!

Leadership First...

Division chairs and other academic administrators must develop skills that promote change. They must, that is, alter their leadership style so as to accomplish much through others.

If you haven't figured it out by now, you are a leader - or you are in the wrong job! You are, at different times, guide and follower, visionary and present-time oriented, pioneer and settler, leader and servant, coach and player. Others are counting on you to fulfill each of these roles. The most critical of these however, is your role as leader - it is the role that binds the rest together!

To be effective though, you will need to be considerate of others, flexible, open-minded, responsive, future-oriented, able to negotiate, and an excellent listener. You will need to develop these skills to accomplish future goals through others . . . as teams.

"A leader's vision is an imperfect moving target. And it should be. To preserve the best of what a [college] can accomplish, leaders have to change with the times. That's certain."

- Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Team Building Revisited...

The idea of teams is not new - it has existed for many years in various forms and disciplines - in the military, athletics, forensics, training, government, volunteerism and so on. The notion of teams gains renewed interest now and again, with the most recent "rebirth" focusing on Total Quality Management, global preparedness, and the decaying social distances between "supervisor" and "supervisee."

It is believed that the implementation of a team yields a synergy not otherwise achievable through individuals acting independently. Essentially, teams (effective ones) strive to improve overall performance and production/output, increase the level of cooperation and morale, improve interpersonal dynamics, reduce conflict, and successfully achieve planned goals.

However, with the rampant reorganization, restructuring, program reviews, calls for accountability, and limited availability of resources that we are now facing in higher education, teams face increasing challenges. Due to these and other external pressures, teams are experiencing stress. This stress affects productivity, efficiency, creativity, and promotes a "motivated self-interest" mentality that has a negative effect on the team and its work.

So how does a division chair and/or academic leader deal with all of this? Is a team all that it's cracked up to be? Should a division chair and/or academic leader continue to promote the team concept? What can a division chair and/or academic leader do to ensure that he/she has an effective team? As with anything that is successful, the division chair and/or academic leader must be committed to making the team concept work. To be sure, the task will be difficult, with many challenges along the way.

Team Building:

Before deciding how to set about the task of building a team, consider first the following working definition:

> A team is a small group (a division, department, etc.) who share responsibility for carrying out a project, initiative, or other task. The team has within it the authority plus technical, interpersonal, and managerial skills to make the decisions about how the work should be done. Team members plan, perform, control, and ultimately evaluate their work.

Journals, textbooks, and leadership institutes are replete with information about teams and their effectiveness. Consider the following myths that abound:

- People cannot work without supervision.
- Teams cannot manage themselves because one individual will assume leadership.
- Only division chairs have the knowledge, training, and experience to understand the needs of the team and the college.
- Teams work fine in business and industry but cannot be applied to higher education.

However, these myths, or challenges, of teams and teamwork, should be balanced with the following proven team benefits . . .

- ✓ Faculty have workable social structures and can supervise themselves.
- ✓ Projects are accomplished with faster response time.
- ✓ More knowledgeable and experienced faculty result from the experience.
- ✓ Higher morale is created with faculty and staff.
- ✓ Greater pride in the faculty's role in the department is achieved.
- ✓ Faculty can hold themselves accountable and each other accountable.
- ✓ Faculty adjust to meet to the needs of the task.
- ✓ Faculty learn a variety of tasks and rotate through tasks continually.

One can assume that the preceding comments were made by thoughtful, experienced, knowledgeable people. So what were the key differentiators between negatively stated myths and the positive outcomes? Teams and team building require a few, critical, minimums. Among them (not necessarily in order):

❶ Start at the Top and with Commitment
❷ Trust
❸ Agreed-upon Ground Rules
❹ Continuous Team Training
❺ Shared and Rotated Division Duties
❻ Goal and Objective Setting
❼ Regular Team Meetings
❽ On-going Feedback/Performance Evaluation
❾ Supervisor Role Change to Facilitator
❿ Fun!

If you cannot commit to these ten core requirements for the long haul, then do not begin the process. It is far better to never begin than to start and stop. The net effect would be to "break faith" with your faculty. The effort will be judged "just another passing fad" and the next time you undertake a division development plan, you will never pull it off. One final point on this subject: To break up a team is far more serious than firing an individual, especially after successes begin to build.

Give team building time. Teams require, on the average, 2-4 years to mature and become effective. The speed at which teams mature is closely related to how well the division chair/administrator understands and uses the principles of team work. It is important that the division chair/administrator must carefully consider the development of the team in every management decision. Major productivity gains will come after a time, with leadership, good coaching, and patience of the division chair and/or academic administrator.

Leader/Coach Profile:

Your faculty and/or staff are, more than likely, unable to read your mind and can only go by what they see you do. You may be asking yourself if you are up to the task - whether you should try to implement this process - whether you have the skills. Therefore, it is important to consider how well you are currently practicing the principles of effective department leadership and team building. The following profile may help you analyze and assess your current approaches.

Enlightened leaders/coaches are committed to their personal development of each of these competencies. Spend a few moments now to critically examine your expertise and ways you can develop these competencies further. Questions are associated with each to prompt your thinking:

1. Script Avoidance - How can I be more aware of, and eliminate, the scripts that I have written for others and for myself?
   Goals ➳

2. Communication - When I communicate with others, do I listen to them carefully or is my mind cluttered with other details? Do I race ahead and jump to conclusions?
Goals ➳

3. Coach - How do I support my faculty/staff? Do I encourage them or do I criticize?
Goals ➳

4. Innovation - How open am I to new ideas or someone else's approach to a problem? Am I content with the status quo?
Goals ➳

5. Confidence - How confident am I in myself; in my abilities and talents? ... in others?
Goals ➳

6. Delegation - Do I have difficulty in passing an assignment to others with full authority and responsibility?... or do I have to do everything myself if I want it done right?
Goals ➳

7. Empathy - How well do I really understand others? Do I know what they enjoy? ...What concerns them? ...What is important to them? Have I taken the time to find out?
Goals ➳

8. Builder of People - Have I contemplated how I can help my faculty/staff become better? ...give them opportunities to grow? ....develop?
Goals ➳

9. Integration - How have I combined all the necessary leadership/coaching skills to be effective? ...Are they in balance? ...Are they appropriate?
Goals ➳

10. Trust - Do I believe in the best of others? Do I share information to help others?
Goals ➳

11. Concern for Others - How much do I care about my faculty/staff?
Goals ➳

12. Personal Leadership - Have I discovered that I can only be a leader/coach for others after I have become a leader/coach for myself? Have I learned the secret of being a learner first?
Goals ➳

(Adapted from: Manning, G. & Curtis, K. (1988). *Leadership.* Cincinnati: Southwestern Publishing Company. pp. 45-49.)

Delegation:

Delegation is the great enabler of people! When well executed, delegation empowers teams and individuals to accomplish much and helps in the advancement of the organization. Consider the following working definition: Delegation occurs when a division chair and/or academic administrator assigns a specific task or responsibility, and grants the authority needed to accomplish the task.

To be sure, delegation is often perceived as a risky business. Many traditional excuses offered for not implementing delegation are listed below for your consideration. Do any sound familiar?

- "I will spend more time teaching someone else to do this rather than if I just did it myself."
- "I've tried delegating before, but I always have to clean up the mess and do it right."
- "_____ just can't handle the project. It's beyond his/her abilities."
- "Some things just cannot be assigned to my faculty."

Keep in mind that delegating may not work in all cases. Are you an effective delegator now? Do you know when to delegate? Ask yourself the following questions:

"Do you do work that a faculty member could do just as well?
Do you think that you are the only one who knows how the job should be done?
Do you leave the job each day loaded down with details to take care of at home?
Do you frequently stay after hours catching up with work although your peers don't?
Do you never seem to get through with you work?
Are you a perfectionist?
Do you tell your employees how to solve problems?

If you answered "yes" to many of these questions, you probably need to learn to delegate more effectively."
(Source: Mosley, D., Megginson, L, and Pietri Jr., P. (1992) Supervisory management: The art of empowering and developing people. p. 139.)

Remember that delegation is not a cure all. It will not, for example, instill trust in you or your division/department where none is initially present. The art of delegation requires practice and great faith. However, the associated benefits will usually make the effort worthwhile. Several benefits are possible through delegation. Among them:

① It frees the division chair/academic administrator to accomplish other tasks.
② It expresses faith in your team.
③ It is a great motivator.
④ It raises expectations in your division/department.
⑤ It increases faculty loyalty toward the college/division chair and/or academic administrator.
⑥ It promotes the development of others.
⑦ It provides for the development of trust among colleagues.

With some practice, you can enhance the overall activities and effectiveness of your division/department through the use of this very vital tool. To aid in your quest, consider the following keys to the successful implementation of delegation:

- ☞ Identify action(s)/task(s) that need to be accomplished and their relative importance to your division/department.
- ☞ Assign the task(s) to your faculty/staff with a clear understanding of the following:
  - √ what is to be accomplished;
  - √ what are the specific desired outcomes of the assignment;
  - √ how does the task contribute to the department/division/college;
  - √ what are the potential risks involved;
  - √ what is the scope of the delegate's responsibility;
  - √ what is the scope of the delegate's authority; and
  - √ how often should the delegate provide status reports to the division chair/dean (* NOTE: It is vital to ensure that the delegate has complete understanding of each of these)
- ☞ Provide necessary training (if required).
- ☞ Periodically check with the delegate regarding his/her progress. (At this step, be sure to provide support to the delegate, listen carefully to his/her concerns, offer advice if requested, do not accept excuses, and reinforce expectations.)
- ☞ Review project completion results with the delegate.
- ☞ Provide feedback as to the performance of the delegate (critical step).

Summary:

The true effectiveness of team building and delegation is demonstrated in the rhythm of faculty/staff working together. Teams, for the most part, are effective, efficient, and fun. In each, the whole (i.e., the team) is greater than the sum of its parts (i.e., faculty acting in isolate.) The intended outcomes tend to go beyond original expectations. Delegation, an important developer of people, helps to unify and extend the team, as well as the individual faculty member.

None of the aforementioned statements or questions are new to us. After reading them, they make sense to us. Over time though, we need reminding about their inherent value and we need to recommit to their implementation. Pressures of the day and increasing workloads often force us back into "individual" thinking. It is exactly then that we should not revert to the "old ways," but stay true to the course of team building and delegation. Good luck!

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